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Hollands have no rights to body

March 29, 2007

BY JACK KRESNAK

FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

LANSING -- Ricky Holland's adoptive parents, serving prison terms for killing him, do not have rights to the 7-year-old's remains, a judge ruled Wednesday.

Ricky's biological parents also have no rights, Ingham County Chief Probate Judge George Economy said, but he left open the possibility other relatives might have a claim.

Ricky's skeletal remains have been held in a laboratory at the Michigan State University Department of Anthropology since soon after his adoptive father led police to them in a swamp near Dansville in January 2006.

Tim and Lisa Holland reported Ricky missing from their Williamston-area home in July 2005. Last September, Tim Holland, 38, pleaded guilty to second-degree murder and was sentenced to 30 to 60 years in prison. He testified against his wife, saying she had struck the boy with a small hammer. Lisa Holland, 34, was convicted of first-degree murder last fall and is serving a life sentence without chance of parole.

Special Prosecutor George Brookover, appointed to sort out the case, asked Economy to grant custody of the remains to Ingham County Medical Examiner Dean Sienko. Brookover wants the judge to terminate the inheritance rights of anyone in Ricky's adoptive family. The hearing resumes April 13.

"I don't know why the State of Michigan or anybody else deserves the right to take over Ricky's body," said Arcie Holland, Tim Holland's mother.

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March 29, 2007

Dad's family fights to bury Ricky

Judge orders hearing after murderer's family challenges Ingham County bid to inter slain boy.

Karen Bouffard / The Detroit News

LANSING -- Ricky Holland's long wait for peace became longer Wednesday, when the family of the man who murdered him challenged Ingham County's efforts to bury the onetime foster child.

Relatives of Tim Holland, who like his wife Lisa is in prison for killing the boy in July 2005, objected to a bid by Ingham County Medical Examiner Dean Sienko for the rights to bury Ricky, prompting Chief Probate Judge George Economy to set an April 13 hearing on the issue.

Tim Holland, in a letter presented as evidence, said he wants Ricky's body given to his mother, Arcie Holland, so he can be laid to rest among family members. The boy's adopted father asked that none of his wife's relatives be given the remains.

"I only want my son to have a Christian burial and for his soul to be at peace," Tim Holland wrote to George Brookover, a special assistant Ingham County prosecutor appointed to untangle the legal issues surrounding Ricky's estate.

"I know I must sound hypocritical; but I must do right by my son. I will more than likely die in prison and I want to meet my Lord and Savior with a clear conscience, knowing that I have finally done what is right for my son."

Ricky's body has been in the custody of the medical examiner since Tim Holland of Williamston led authorities to his body in a swamp in January 2006. The child was bludgeoned to death with a hammer on July 1, 2005.

Tim Holland is serving 30-60 years after pleading guilty to second-degree murder and testifying against his wife. Last fall, she was convicted of first-degree murder and is in prison for life.

Brookover argued Sienko should oversee the burial because Ricky's body needs to be preserved to present evidence in case more charges are forthcoming or Lisa Holland appeals.

Economy disagreed, saying just because the Hollands lost rights to Ricky doesn't mean the adoptive relatives should.

"The tree of the family still branches out," Economy said. "There needs to be a hearing to determine 'who are these people.' "

Arcie Holland said she spoke on behalf of Ricky's siblings, Joseph, 5, Kathryn, 4, Samuel, 3, and Allison, 2, who are being cared for by Tim's sisters, Weston and Margaret Miller, both of Dewitt.

Ricky's siblings "need some kind of closure so they can get on with their life," Arcie Holland said.

"I don't think the state of Michigan or anyone else has the right to take over Ricky's body."

You can reach Karen Bouffard at (734) 462-2206 or kbouffard@detnews.com.

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This is a printer friendly version of an article from **Lansing State Journal**. To print this article open the file menu and choose Print.

Published March 29, 2007

Who will bury Ricky?

Decision on 7-year-old's remains delayed until hearing on April 13

By Derek Wallbank
Lansing State Journal

A decision on who will bury Ricky Holland's remains has been delayed after an Ingham County judge ruled the slain 7-year-old's adoptive family may have rights to his body.

Ingham County Probate Judge George Economy agreed with prosecutors that Tim and Lisa Holland lost custody of Ricky's remains when they were convicted of his murder, and that Ricky's biological family lost their familial rights when he was adopted.

But Economy said Ricky's adoptive family may have rights to his body and he set an April 13 hearing to determine the dead boy's heirs.

"I don't think that the law says that the rights of the rest of the family are terminated," Economy said.

"The tree still branches out, if you will."

Wednesday's hearing was the result of a petition filed by Ing-ham County Medical Examiner Dean Sienko to take custody of Ricky's remains.

"A lot of people are looking for closure," Sienko said.

Though Sienko said plans had not been "clearly defined yet," he said it was his intention to preserve the remains while laying them to rest.

Prosecutor Stuart Dunnings III has said his office has concerns about burying the remains: "We want to preserve their evidentiary value."

Dunnings' office is being represented by East Lansing attorney George Brookover, who has extensive experience in probate matters.

The evidentiary value is key, Brookover said, because the state of Michigan has the right "to continue and sustain prosecution."

Lisa Holland has appealed her conviction, and Dunnings has said that the investigation into Ricky's death is ongoing.

Tim Holland weighs in

What's next

- Ingham County Probate Judge George Economy will hear arguments from those wishing to take custody of Ricky's remains at a hearing at 1:30 p.m. April 13.

Media files:

- [Petition from medical examiner to take custody of Ricky Holland's remains - pdf](#)
- [Tim Holland letter to prosecutor's office concerning Ricky Holland's remains - GIF](#)

But Holland family members argued that despite the way Ricky died, he was still a member of their family, and they should be the ones to make his burial arrangements.

"I don't see where the state of Michigan, or anyone else, deserves the right to take Ricky's body," said Arcie Holland, Ricky's adoptive grandmother.

Holland said she is particularly concerned for Ricky's four young siblings.

"They need some closure so they can move on with their lives," she said.

Tim Holland also wrote Brookover a letter, which was submitted as evidence Wednesday in court, asking that Arcie Holland be given custody of Ricky's remains.

"I know I must sound hypocritical; but I must do right by my son," Holland wrote.

"I want to meet my Lord and Saviour with a clear conscience, knowing that I have finally done what is right for my son."

The hearing originally was set for April 13 but was moved to Wednesday after Sienko's petition was amended last week, Brookover and Dunnings said.

"The probate code requires the amended motion be heard within seven days," Brookover said.

Holland family upset

But members of the Holland family said they weren't notified that the hearing date had changed.

"We're a little upset because we had to find out this morning from the news that the hearing was today," said Holland family spokesman Rod Weston, also an editorial assistant at the State Journal.

"If we hadn't heard from somebody, then we wouldn't have known to be there."

Dunnings and Brookover said notices of the hearing were sent last week to all parties, including the Hollands, notifying them of the change.

Contact Derek Wallbank at 267-1301 or dwallbank@lsj.com.

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Judge Goes Beyond State Guidelines In Baby Abuse Sentencing

March 28, 2007 06:37 PM EDT

(TV5) -- A mother accused of abusing her month old baby is handed her sentence.

Stardust Welshans was convicted of child abuse, a crime that, according to state guidelines, calls for a year in the county jail. The judge, however, thought she deserved more.

Twenty-four year old Stardust Welshans nearly killed her child, but when she talked with TV-5 shortly after the incident happened back in February of 2006, she blamed a babysitter for severe injuries to her 28 day old boy. Welshans' husband, Ryan, came forward and admitted that his wife was the culprit. It was a case that consumed the prosecutor's office and sheriff's department.

Welshans could have received one year in the county jail for her crime, but Circuit Judge Richard Knoblock went outside those state guidelines to sentence the woman to two-and-a-half to ten years in prison.

While Welshans will serve at least two-and-a-half years behind bars, her soon-to-be ex-husband received a one year sentence for his role in the case.



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Nanny charged with infant's death

Preliminary examination set for May 10

By Jennifer S. McDonald
C & G Staff Writer

ROCHESTER — Kelly Marie Waller of Madison Heights has been charged with homicide, manslaughter and first-degree child abuse in the death of a 9-week-old she was caring for March 13.

Waller, 30, was arraigned before 52-3 District Court Judge Lisa Asadoorian on a warrant issued by the Oakland County Prosecutor's Office after police and fire personnel responded to a 911 call July 14 at about 1:20 a.m. of an unresponsive baby on Ross Lane.

The child, Ajay Bose, was transported to Royal Oak Beaumont Hospital, where injuries consistent with shaken baby syndrome were diagnosed. On July 31, the child died. The Oakland County Medical Examiner determined the cause of death to be cranial cerebral trauma.

Judge Asadoorian set bond at \$100,000. Waller has been released on a tether and was told to not have contact with any children under the age of 18, Assistant County Prosecutor Sara Pope-Starnes said.

"The allegation was that she was a nighttime nanny, and this child died as a result of abusive head trauma with impact," Pope-Starnes added. "If she's convicted of the felony murder, it's life (in prison). If she's charged with manslaughter or child abuse, she could serve up to 15 years in state prison."

The manslaughter charge was filed as an alternative to homicide, Pope-Starnes said. She declined further comment on the case.

A preliminary exam is scheduled for May 10 before Judge Nancy Tolwin Carniak.

James Thomas, Waller's attorney, did not return phone calls seeking comment.

You can reach Jennifer McDonald at jmcdonald@candgnews.com or at (586) 279-1112.

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Town mourns 3rd abandoned newborn

DNA points to same mom

March 29, 2007

BY GARANCE BURKE

ASSOCIATED PRESS

OROSI, Calif. -- The first newborn was discovered swaddled in a blanket on a park bench, an umbilical cord still hanging from his tiny body. Then, at neat 11-month intervals, two more abandoned babies were found in parked pickups in the same neighborhood.

This week, DNA tests established all three babies were likely born to the same mother.

Now, in a heartbreaking mystery that has transfixed this central California farm community of 7,300, investigators are trying to find the mother and figure out what drove her to such desperate lengths.

"How can the relatives not see this girl pregnant and then see that she's not pregnant anymore and not ask where's the baby? Somebody must know something," said Hortencia Espino, 81, a resident of the town.

All three newborns were found within a 2-block radius. The first two -- a boy and a girl -- survived and are wards of the state.

The third baby was found dead of exposure on the cold night of Dec. 3. She was enveloped in a sweatshirt in the bed of a pickup parked near the high school, 60 miles southeast of Fresno.

The coroner concluded she had been alive less than a day.

On Wednesday, community members held a funeral mass for the baby girl, who was dubbed Angelita DeOrosi, or Orosi's little angel.

"This community was very upset and confused after the first baby, let alone the second and the third who passed away," sheriff's Sgt. Chris Douglass said.

"Having the memorial will help bring them some closure and give the babies the love and respect and dignity they should have received in life."

Community's help is sought

Orosi, a town encircled by fig and lemon orchards, has long been the kind of place where everyone seemed to know each other. But that is changing, with new housing developments going up and a burgeoning gang problem that has led to a rise in violent crime.

As upset residents built makeshift shrines in memory of Angelita, authorities interviewed local women they thought might be involved. But DNA testing eliminated them as the babies' mother.

After exhausting all leads, officials are asking the community for help finding the parents and are offering a \$5,000 reward. Police said the mother could face criminal charges. But they also said they want to make sure she doesn't do it again and isn't in some kind of distress.

Investigators would not speculate as to the reasons for the abandonment, such as whether the mother might have been a prostitute or a rape victim.

"Whether the mother is in a physical state of danger or a mental state where she feels she can't ask for help, our heart goes out to her," said Karen Franzen, manager of Dopkins

Funeral Chapel in Dinuba, which donated a casket and cemetery plot for Angelita.

The first deserted newborn was found on Feb. 10, 2005, a barely breathing boy with a body temperature of just 85 degrees.

On Jan. 8, 2006, a resident discovered a full-term baby girl inside a pickup 2 blocks away, clothed in an undershirt and pants.

On Monday, sheriff's officials announced the DNA results. The first two babies probably had the same father, but Angelita was fathered by a different man.

California and 46 other states, including Michigan, allow parents to legally abandon a child at a hospital or other designated safe zones within 72 hours of birth, no questions asked.

Since California's law went into effect in 2001, parents have safely surrendered 182 babies at fire stations, emergency rooms and other havens, according to state officials.

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HOUSE PASSES ANTI-BULLYING MEASURES

On nearly party-line votes, the House on Wednesday approved legislation requiring schools to set up anti-bullying policies. But while both sides said their votes were going to protect children, members of each party laid claim that the other was voting with special interests really in mind.

Parents, children and activists gathered at the Capitol earlier in the day to lobby for the passage of anti-bullying legislation the House, calling it a measure that would finally protect children from bullying and harassment.

[HB 4162](#) drew the largest ire from members as at first the bill was stripped down from its original version to simply state school districts would have to create a policy that meets the definitions set forth by the State Board of Education's model policy (See [Gongwer Michigan Report, September 12, 2006](#)) in terms of bullying; that the Department of Education report back to the Legislature after a year on what policies have been adopted and that bullying or harassment be defined to include that which is perceived to be "motivated by animus or by an actual or perceived characteristic."

Several Republican members commented that the bill deleted key components that would have required the schools to investigate bullying more thoroughly and provide disciplinary measures. They also criticized the bill for creating classes of students and not simply providing a safety net for all children.

Republicans then tried to amend the bill several times by asking for record roll call votes on their amendments, all of which were denied by majority Democrats. That upset GOP members even more as they booed loudly as each request was dismissed. Democrats repeatedly told members that there would be no demonstrations on the House floor and finally had the sergeant at arms ensure that every member was sitting in his or her seat.

[Minority Floor Leader Chris Ward](#) (R-Brighton) then called for a point of order, which led to a recess of activity until Democrats came back and allowed members to vote on whether or not to support consideration of the eight Republican amendments, but not on whether or not to adopt the actual amendments themselves.

"I'm very disappointed with the process and I'm hugely disappointed with the policy," [Rep. John Moolenaar](#) (R-Midland) commented.

But proponents of the bill said Republicans were missing the boat on its purpose.

"Kids can be very cruel to one another. It can drive some people to the breaking point," said [Rep. Andy Meisner](#) (D-Ferndale). "From where I'm sitting this is a very reasonable proposal that will give us the opportunity to say bullying is wrong, don't do it."

[Rep. Pam Byrnes](#) (D-Chelsea), the bill sponsor, said "This is inclusive not exclusive."

And [Rep. Matt Gillard](#) (D-Alpena) charged that Republicans were "making it about a gay or moral issue" and "that's ridiculous."

Republicans charged back that the bill was putting gender identity and expression into law for the first time and that it was retribution to Jon Stryker, the billionaire philanthropist

who piled millions into the Coalition for Progress which ran ads during the election against some Republican candidates. Mr. Stryker has also been an advocate for gay rights.

“It’s about respect. It doesn’t matter what the situation is,” said [Rep. Judy Emmons](#) (R-Sheridan).

And [Rep. Bill Huizenga](#) (R-Zeeland) said the schools are “stomaching” the legislation because it was so watered down. He argued parents want stronger measures in place so that schools discipline children who engage in bullying activities.

HB 4162 passed on a 59-50 vote with [Rep. Ed Gaffney](#) (R-Grosse Pointe Farms), [Rep. David Palsrok](#) (R-Manistee), [Rep. Tonya Schuitmaker](#) (R-Lawton) and [Rep. Lorence Wenke](#) (R-Richland) joining Democrats in support, while [Rep. Michael Sak](#) (D-Grand Rapids), [Rep. Joel Sheltrown](#) (D-West Branch) and [Rep. Dudley Spade](#) (D-Tipton) joined Republicans in dissenting. [Rep. Jack Brandenburg](#) (R-Harrison Township) did not vote.

The other bill in the package, [HB 4091](#), drew less consternation. The legislation requires the department to create a model anti-bullying policy within 30 days of enactment and pass that along to school districts and parents. The bill received a vote of 66-43 with all Democrats supporting it along with Mr. Brandenburg, Mr. Gaffney, Mr. Huizenga, Mr. Palsrok, Ms. Schuitmaker, Mr. Wenke, [Rep. John Proos](#) (R-St. Joseph), [Rep. John Stakoe](#) (R-Highland) and [Rep. Glenn Steil Jr.](#) (R-Cascade).

THE SCENE OUTSIDE THE CHAMBERS: The Triangle Foundation and other groups organized the day so members of communities from all over the state could meet with their representatives and stress the importance of the legislation.

Dawn Wolfe, director of communications for the Triangle Foundation, said they held the lobbying day to show that there is widespread support for the bill and give people the opportunity to interact with their elected officials.

Ms. Wolfe said the legislation is both practical and symbolic; it helps children who are being bullied and sends the message that that kind of behavior won’t be tolerated.

“We need elected officials to stand up and say this won’t be tolerated, we want bullying behavior to be considered not acceptable,” Ms. Wolfe said.

Sonja Langdon, a member of Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays in Detroit and a resident of Rochester Hills spent her day meeting with senators and representatives and said the bills help children regardless of orientation.

“This bill is necessary to protect our children so they can learn and be bright and thrive,” Ms. Langdon said. “Bullying puts a stress on their thinking and behavior and affects them in a bad way.”

Many of the people who came to the lobbying day were students who faced bullying issues of their own.

“School is a place where you’re supposed to feel safe and not be reluctant to go to,” David Sims, a student from Troy Athens High School said.

Mr. Sims said he’s been bullied for a number of reasons including because his mother is gay and because of the way he dresses.

“This law is important because kids will know they’re safe,” Mr. Sims said.

Another student who came to lobby for the legislation, Caius Schneider from Berkley High School, said the law is necessary because when she was bullied at a technical school, she was ignored.

“Under the bill the school has to make a policy and it makes sure schools are held responsible so they just can’t ignore it,” Ms. Schneider said

Ms. Wolfe said having students be a part of the day was important because they are the ones directly affected by the issue of bullying and harassment.

“It’s a chance for them to say this is what I need you to do for me,” Ms. Wolfe said. “This issue has lots of very real faces.”

Some legislators and others have expressed concern that the legislation would specifically prohibit bullying based on certain characteristics such as sexual orientation, gender, height and weight.

Gary Glenn, executive director of the American Family Association of Michigan, said the intent of the legislation isn’t what its backers say it is.

“If the real intent of the legislation was to protect students from bullying, the bill would simply protect all students and prohibit bullying against any student for any reason, period,” Mr. Glenn said. “The fact that the bill creates special protected classes shows the real agenda here.”

But Sean Kosofsky, director of policy at the Triangle Foundation, said enumerating the characteristics is critical because it leaves little room for schools to do nothing about bullying.

“Until something is prohibited it’s permitted,” Mr. Kosofsky said.

Enumerating helps protect students who are particularly targeted by bullies and makes students feel safer and doesn’t create any kind of special class, Ms. Wolfe said.

“It doesn’t put anybody apart, it makes everybody equal,” Ms. Wolfe said.

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Article published Mar 29, 2007

Child abuse task force is good step

Kudos to the Canton Police Department for attempting to take a proactive approach to a frightening trend that has developed in the township in recent years. As a result of the rising number of child abuse incidents occurring in Canton, the police department is assembling a focus group that will hopefully come up with some solutions to the problem.

The idea, according to Public Safety Director John Santomauro, is to bring to the table people from all walks of life -- public officials, teachers, parents, social workers, anyone who can provide insight on how to stem the problem.

Santomauro said he was shocked to learn of the number of child abuse cases involving children under the age of 2 during the last couple years in Canton. Many of the cases have been high-profile, including a couple instances where the children were actually killed. While the police department has to deal with the cases, he said it ultimately is not a police issue.

It, surprisingly, is also not a socioeconomic issue. Santomauro said the cases have involved families from across the social spectrum -- rich, poor and middle class. He feels it is a parenting issue. Ultimately, this problem starts and stops in the home.

While many of the details concerning the task force are still to be determined, the department will offer its first "Positive Parenting" seminar at 6 p.m. Monday, April 23, at Canton's Summit on the Park. Anyone interested in solving this horrible problem should attend. Because we all have a stake in protecting those who are most vulnerable to violence -- our children.

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Article published Mar 28, 2007

LOCAL: CAP Council seeks award nominations

The Child Abuse Prevention Council is seeking nominations for its annual Champion for Children Award, which will be given out at its annual fundraiser on April 20.

The award is given to a person who devotes significant time and energy to helping children in Livingston County.

The award is given by the CAP Council and Great Start Livingston.

Nominations should be in the form of a one-page letter describing the nominee and why they are deserving of the award. The person making the nomination should include his or her own name, address and contact information. The letter can be e-mailed to cap@wrc-livingston.org, or faxed to (517) 548-7751, attention CAP Council.

The nominations are due Friday.

For more information, contact Deanna Norris of the CAP Council at (517) 548-2200 or Emily Ladd of Great Start Livingston at (517) 540-6829.

[Print Page](#)

Jury convicts Keen of domestic violence

Thursday, March 29, 2007 9:55 AM EDT

CASSOPOLIS - A Dowagiac man who grabbed his estranged wife by the throat and threw her to the ground was found guilty of domestic violence Tuesday by a Cass County jury.

The jury of six heard testimony that Jason Keen assaulted his wife during a dispute at his girlfriend's house.

The victim testified that Keen grabbed her around the throat, leaving visible injuries that were observed by Dowagiac Police Department officers, who investigated the case.

The domestic violence case was presented to the jury by Cass County Chief Assistant Prosecutor Jason Ronning.

Fourth District Court Judge Paul Deats presided over the trial.

Ronning stated, "Holding today's domestic violence offender accountable can prevent future serious injuries and even death."

Keen was sentenced immediately after the verdict to nine months of probation, including anger management classes.



Muskegon Chronicle

Teens get probation for trashing high school

Thursday, March 29, 2007

By John S. Hausman

jhausman@muskegonchronicle.com

All five teens who trashed Western Michigan Christian High School last October have received their promised identical sentences: probation, restitution, "restorative justice" and the prospect of having the convictions dismissed if they behave.

The last sentencing was Monday by 14th Circuit Judge William C. Marietti, of 16-year-old Adam Brown, 2464 Winchester, who was sentenced as a juvenile. Like the other four defendants, Brown pleaded guilty earlier to malicious destruction of a building causing damage between \$1,000 and \$20,000.

Marietti earlier this month sentenced John Michael Puisis III of 5895 Henry and Jarrod Scott Brandt of 3653 Courtland, both 18, as adults.

Also sentenced earlier as juveniles were Andrew Medenbach, 16, of 3665 Courtland, by Probate Judge Gregory C. Pittman; and Austin Lane, 17, of 4890 Rambling Creek, who was 16 when the vandalism occurred, by Chief Probate Judge Neil G. Mullally.

As arranged earlier when the youths pleaded guilty, these were their sentences: Probation, six months in the case of the adults and until a judge's determination for the juveniles; \$23,320 restitution, to be split equally and paid by April 30; 10 hours of community service to be performed at the high school and 60 hours for Muskegon Habitat for Humanity; and compliance with the terms laid down by the county's Balanced and Restorative Justice program.

Under the restorative justice program, criminals sit down with their victims in a supervised setting and devise amends that are acceptable to the victims. In this case, that includes apologies to the school, the community and their parents; and various sanctions imposed by the schools the teens attend, Western Michigan Christian in some cases and Mona Shores in others.

In all cases, the convictions will be dismissed and the criminal records purged if the youths comply with all terms of their sentences. None of the teens had any prior involvement with the criminal-justice system.

The extensive damage inflicted during the early morning hours of Oct. 29 forced the next-day cancellation of classes at the school at 455 E. Ellis. Fire extinguishers were set off inside the school, dozens of raw eggs were broken and toilet paper was strewn around.

School officials had said they wanted to handle the matter internally and had worked out agreements with the boys' families that included disciplinary action and restitution. Two of the boys apologized to the student body during a chapel service, saying that what was meant to be a "simple prank" escalated, according to a school press release.

But Prosecutor Tony Tague, who later started his own investigation and met with school officials, said the students should be prosecuted because a serious crime had been committed, and a message needed to be sent to students across the county that actions have consequences. The five were charged three weeks after the vandalism.

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KALAMAZOO GAZETTE

Three teens arrested in separate break-in cases in Van Buren

Wednesday, March 28, 2007

Gazette Staff Reports

Three area teens are in the Van Buren County Jail awaiting arraignment on breaking-and-entering charges.

Van Buren County Sheriff's Office deputies and a K-9 dog responded to an alarm at 11:36 p.m. Tuesday at the Peacock Ridge Golf Course, 94777 M-40, in Porter Township.

They found shattered glass in one of the doors and saw a vehicle north of the golf course and stopped the car. A 17-year-old and a 19-year-old confessed to breaking into the golf club and stealing five bottles of liquor, authorities said.

In a separate case, deputies arrested a 17-year-old Mattawan teenager and are looking for another suspect in connection with a string of vehicle break-ins in Antwerp Township and Mattawan.

Several vehicles in the 59000 block of Whitewood Drive in Antwerp Township were broken into about 1:20 a.m. Saturday. While deputies were investigating, they saw two people crossing a road nearby and were able to stop one of them, the 17-year-old. The second person fled.

The 17-year-old had property in his possession and confessed to breaking into several vehicles in the area, authorities said.

A K-9 dog tracked the second person to the 26000 block of County Road 364 before losing him. While tracking that suspect, deputies found several pieces of stolen property.

Two men arrested

after vehicle break-ins

Two men were arrested early today after several vehicles were broken into at the Walnut Trails Apartment complex in Portage.

Police arrested the Portage men, who are in their early 20s, about 4 a.m. after a Walnut Trails resident heard her car alarm go off twice. After the second time, she said she saw a man running from the car and a vehicle leaving the complex with its lights off.

She gave police a description of the vehicle and it was stopped on Admiral Street, where officers found property they believe was taken from the vehicles.

Father, son arrested

in drug, alcohol case

A White Pigeon Township father and son have been arrested on drug and alcohol charges.

Deputies arrested the two Tuesday night after getting an anonymous tip that the father was allegedly providing marijuana to his 16-year-old son. Marijuana and drug paraphernalia were found in the U.S. 12 home along with a "large amount" of alcohol in the teen's refrigerator, officers said.

While officers were at the home, the father arrived in a vehicle. Police said they found suspected

methamphetamine and a glass pipe in the vehicle.

The father faces charges of possession of methamphetamine, possession of marijuana and driving while his license was suspended, seventh offense. The 16-year-old faces charges in juvenile court of possession of marijuana and being a minor in possession of alcohol.

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Michigan Report

March 28, 2007

MEDICAID RECOVERY PROGRAM APPROVED BY PANEL

A Medicaid estate recovery program could be created to help recoup some of the state's Medicaid costs under legislation reported to the Senate by the Appropriations Committee on Wednesday.

Michigan is the only state that does not now have an estate recovery program, required by federal law, and Governor Jennifer Granholm has called for such a program to be created to help stave off some of the state's budget problems.

[SB 374](#) allows the state to create the program that would allow the state to put a lien on the property of the Medicaid recipients, mostly elderly nursing home residents, to recover some of the costs spent on their care.

The bill is expected to only raise about \$1.7 million, and was opposed by AARP.

[Sen. Martha Scott](#) (D-Highland Park) opposed the measure along with [Sen. Irma Clark-Coleman](#) (D-Detroit) saying that in many cases the property seized will the individual's house, and those houses will then sit vacant for a period of time and add to the issues of blight in the neighborhoods in the state's cities.

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Community gathers to stamp out homelessness

By CHERYLL WARREN Argus-Press Staff Writer

Wednesday, March 28, 2007 10:07 AM EDT

There are people who have struggled with homelessness who now have a home - and others like them constantly hope for a similar outcome.

Three of the fortunate ones appeared Tuesday morning at the Shiawassee County Homeless Summit, held at the Baker College of Owosso Welcome Center. They described their struggles to be off the street and the good fortunes which led to their now having housing.

The Summit was presented by the Shiawassee County Homeless Coalition, with a goal of putting a face on homelessness.

Presented at the summit was a plan to help the county end homelessness by 2017. The plan highlights community collaboration to establish an office to end homelessness and hire a champion who would coordinate homeless services throughout the county.

The plan is expected to be developed over the next 10 years through a community effort.

The three presenters - each of whom had been homeless at some point in their lives - spoke of their homeless experiences on a previously-filmed video. Each also took part in a panel discussion along with representatives at the forefront of a community effort to combat homelessness.

The presenters said a support system was a huge part of being able to step out of homeless situations.

Jesse Shattler, 18, found himself homeless when his mother passed away and his stepbrother, with whom Shattler, a teenager, had been placed by the courts, kicked him out of the house.

"He told me to pack up my stuff and leave," Shattler said.

He occasionally stayed with friends when he could find a couch to sleep on.

"Not all parents want a homeless person to sleep at their house," he said.

Another friend with a car let him store his bags of clothes in the trunk of the car and sleep in the back seat.

He is certain that teachers saw him sorting through his clothes in the trunk of the car, looking for something to wear the next day.

He found it harder to go to school looking presentable, and sometimes only showed up for one or two classes and lunch.

Another friend finally offered Shattler an empty trailer belonging to a family member. Even though there was no electricity, it was a place to go.

With a little more help from people who cared about him, he now has an apartment and is finishing school at Lincoln High School in Owosso. He graduates this spring and hopes to find a job.

Mercy Temple became homeless when, as the mother of a 3-week-old baby, she feared for the life of her child following an attack by her boyfriend. At the earliest opportunity after the attack, she fled with her child, a diaper bag with some baby items and a backpack with a few personal items for herself.

Although she was living in Florida at the time, she still was challenged by the cool nights and soon needed food for her baby. She tried to stay with a couple of friends, but her locations were soon discovered by her boyfriend. In between beds, she tried to sleep on park benches.

"You can't really sleep on a park bench with a 3-week-old baby," she said.

Temple still remembers begging for food and for money to buy formula for her baby, and remembers looking through

dumpsters for a half-eaten hamburger.

She wants people to know that not everyone begging for money will use that money for alcohol.

People from a nearby church pulled together an emergency fund and bought her a ticket to Michigan, where she tried to live with her parents. That worked for only a short time. She then found herself in a shelter for three months, the maximum amount of time she could stay there.

Temple remembers the fear she felt about trying to ask community agencies for help, not knowing if someone might try to take her baby from her.

Although years ago now, she also remembers how much it would have meant to her then if someone had offered her a sandwich or a blanket.

She found support from some former foster care parents with whom she made contact again.

Today as a single mother, she now lives in a three-bedroom apartment with her children, and has a Michigan State Housing Development Authority housing grant to help with the rent. Although on a tight budget, she is able to care for her family.

Richard Ash, 40, also knows the importance of support. He was homeless nearly two years at one point.

"When you lose your job and lose your apartment, you're just out there trying to survive," he said.

He described living on the streets, not having much sleep.

"You will do what you have to do," he said.

Recently discharged from prison, Ash received support from a volunteer team representing local community agencies.

He has found work and moved into an apartment.

"When you have support....you don't want to let them down," he said.

For information, contact the Shiawassee County Homeless Coalition at 743-4190 or 723-3115.

Pine River youth go hungry for a cause

By Sally Barber, Cadillac News

LEROY — Hunger is no longer a stranger to more than 140 Pine River area teens who participated in a 30-hour fast to raise money for food relief.

Youth from eight local churches began the fund-raiser after lunch Friday, raising almost \$8,000 for the Christian International relief organization World Vision.

"I learned it's not hard to help people," said high school junior Ethan Russell from LeRoy United Methodist Church. "Doing a little bit goes a long ways."

Participating students wore orange T-shirts to school and raised funds by asking for 25-cent donations from fellow students for the privilege of signing their shirts. They also collected money knocking on doors, from friends, relatives and their congregations.

It was a chance for all students to make a difference, according to Dorice Koetje, Pine River Area Youth parent leader from Tustin First Baptist Church.

"It didn't matter if they were athletic, musical, came from broken homes, were rich or poor," she said. "They were there for the same purpose. They could all help."

In addition to raising funds for food relief at home and abroad, the 30-hour famine project aims to develop compassion for those struggling daily with poverty and lack. Students were committed to maintaining the fast and walking in the shoes of others, Koetje said.

"They really wanted to succeed at feeling what it was to be hungry and wanted to fast the full 30 hours," she said.

In 30 hours, the youth gained some lasting impressions.

"It gave them a realization that there are hungry children in our world," Koetje said. "They knew theirs was temporary and they became sensitive to the fact there are those who didn't know if they would be able to eat the next day."

The taste of hunger opened doors of understanding.

"It's just a small part of what kids in other countries go through," said Katie Bowman, a ninth-grader from Common Ground Church of Pine River.

Bowman said the hunger bothered her most at night.

"When I wake up, I always expect I'm going to eat but I had to tell myself I couldn't," she said.

It wasn't until he was into the 25th hour of the fast that Russell began to feel deprivation.

"I didn't start getting hungry until the last day," he said.

The fast was broken Saturday evening with a communion service followed by a church-sponsored dinner where Russell said he filled up on Swiss steak, mashed potatoes, rolls, vegetables and dessert, then headed to work where he ate a quesadilla.

The hunger experience behind them, the teens could feel satisfaction knowing the dollars they raised will feed 21 children for one year.

Your local connection

- Event: 30-hour famine
- Purpose: To raise funds for World Vision food relief projects
- Participants: 140 Pine River area teens

Printable Version

- Amount raised: \$8,000
- Beneficiaries: Funds will feed 21 children for one year

sbarber@cadillacnews.com (231) 775-NEWS



State jobless rate improves

Recalls from auto layoffs credited

March 29, 2007

BY JOHN GALLAGHER

FREE PRESS BUSINESS WRITER

Recalls from short-term automotive layoffs helped reduce Michigan's unemployment rate in February.

The state jobless rate declined to 6.6% during the month from 6.9% in January and from 6.8% in February of last year, according to data released Wednesday by the Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Growth.

The good news is that the automotive recalls translated into an increase of 11,000 jobs in the state's manufacturing sector. State factories, however, still employ an estimated 28,000 fewer workers than they did a year ago.

Over that same 12-month period, several other key industry sectors recorded substantial losses. Those included trade, transportation and utilities (down 13,000 jobs), construction (down 11,000) and government (down 9,000).

The only major job category to display notable job gains over the past year was education and health services, which saw an increase of 9,000 jobs, mostly in the subcategory of health services.

The national jobless rate decreased by one-tenth of a percentage point in February to 4.5%.

Apart from recalls in auto-related manufacturing, "employment in the remaining industries continued relatively unchanged over the month," said Rick Waclawek, director of DLEG's Bureau of Labor Market Information and Strategic Initiatives.

Contact **JOHN GALLAGHER** at 313-222-5173 or gallagher@freepress.com.

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Unemployment Down .3% Points

MIRS, March 28, 2007

The state's unemployment rate decreased from 6.9 percent in January to 6.6 percent in February, according to the Department of Labor and Economic Growth (DLEG), but the drop isn't reason for celebration.

Despite the 6.6 percent rate being two-tenth of a percentage point better than February 2006, the state's labor force over the month declined by 13,000 jobs over the month, with 16,000 dropping off the unemployment rolls while 3,000 other found jobs.

"The decline in the statewide February jobless rate can be largely traced to recalls from short-term layoffs in auto-related manufacturing," said Rick **WACLAWEK**, director of DLEG's Bureau of Labor Market Information and Strategic Initiatives. "Employment in the remaining industries continued relatively unchanged over the month."

February's 6.6 unemployment rate is the lowest monthly unemployment rate the state's seen since May 2006. Michigan's workforce total in February was about 10,000 lower than the state's 2006 annual average.

The jobless rate in Detroit declined from 7.3 percent in January to 6.4 percent in February. These increases can largely be attributed to the auto industry, according to DLEG.



Granholm to staff: Prepare for partial state government shutdown

March 28, 2007

By CHRIS CHRISTOFF

FREE PRESS LANSING BUREAU CHIEF

LANSING — Gov. Jennifer Granholm is planning for a possible partial shutdown of state government sometime in May because of the state's worsening finances.

With a \$940-million deficit, the state faces a cash flow shortage of some \$400 million by May 1.

Granholm told the heads of state departments at a meeting Tuesday to draft contingency plans for a partial shutdown, said spokesperson Liz Boyd.

"We're going to have unprecedented cash flow problems in May," Boyd said. "It's very early in the year to experience this kind of problem. We simply want to have contingency plans.

"We're asking departments to identify what could be involved and what steps must be taken."

Granholm is considering consolidating state departments to save money, and perhaps not renewing contracts with some high-level employees, according to a person familiar with the meeting. That person is not authorized to speak on the matter and spoke on condition of anonymity.

Senate Republicans were poised today to rescind a 2% pay raise for state employees scheduled for Oct. 1. The action would save the state about \$109 million next year.

The measure was to be taken up by the Senate Appropriations Committee. Erasing the pay raise would require a two-thirds vote of the House and Senate.

Marianne Udow, director of the Department of Human Services, said a partial shutdown of state government would amount to a total shutdown of her department, which handles welfare and child protective services in Michigan.

Her 10,000 employees are already pressed to serve their clients. Each welfare worker handles about 600 cases, while protective services workers, who investigate child abuse and neglect, handle about 40 cases apiece.

"If we don't have money to provide services, the workload is intolerable. I truly believe we are putting children in jeopardy even with the current budget."

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Published March 29, 2007

Governor looking at possible shutdown

Department heads asked for contingency proposals

By Kathy Barks Hoffman
Associated Press

Gov. Jennifer Granholm has asked state department heads to tell her by next week what programs might be affected and what steps should be taken if the state runs out of money in May and has to shut down.

"The money issue is real. This is not a fabricated crisis," Granholm spokeswoman Liz Boyd said Wednesday. "The governor has made it clear for months the emergency we're facing."

The Democratic governor has suggested a plan to help resolve some of the \$940 million shortfall in this year's budget through \$344 million in cuts and accounting changes. But she also wants to put a new 2 percent tax on services in place by June 1 to raise more money, something Republicans have rejected.

During a Wednesday speech to the United Auto Workers union's bargaining convention in Detroit, Granholm insisted again that the state cannot cut its way out of its financial problems.

"We need a different philosophy in this country and certainly in this state if we are to be competitive," she said.

"If we slash our investment in education, we have slashed our ability to compete. If we slash worker-training efforts, we have slashed our ability to compete."

Senate Republicans last week voted down the governor's proposed tax on services, adopted her executive order making \$344 million in spending cuts, then passed another \$600 million in cuts and accounting changes.

Their plan, which included a \$34 cut in the per-pupil grants given to K-12 schools this year as well as spending decreases for local governments, community corrections, health care and other programs, is unacceptable to the governor and unlikely to get through the Democratic-controlled House.

House Republicans on Wednesday announced legislation that would form a bipartisan commission they said would examine potential savings in services such as human resources, payroll, mail, janitorial duties, purchasing and printing, as well as other state spending.

Granholm plans to close two state police posts

Gov. Jennifer Granholm's administration notified state lawmakers Wednesday that it plans to close two Michigan State Police posts in the fall because of the state's budget crisis.

The posts are located in Calumet in the Upper Peninsula and in Hart, between Muskegon and Ludington. Closing the posts on Oct. 1 would save \$230,000, State Police spokeswoman Shannon Akans said.

Granholm proposed closing three posts in 2005, but money later was found to keep them open.

House Minority Leader Craig DeRoche, R-Novi, pointed out that Granholm has proposed laying off state troopers at the same time her husband, Dan Mulhern, has a state office and three staffers. "The largesse in government simply is breathtaking when you peel back the layers," DeRoche said at a news conference.

But House Majority Floor Leader Steve Tobocman, D-Detroit, said there's no time to wait for a commission. State Treasurer Robert Kleine said earlier this week that the state could have a \$400 million deficit by May if something isn't done.

"We're open to any ... specific ideas to save the taxpayers' money that don't take away important services," Tobocman said. But "we need these suggestions yesterday."

DeRoche dismissed talk of a government shutdown, saying it's not necessary. Asked why Granholm would be discussing it, DeRoche replied, "Maybe it's a scare tactic aimed at the House of Representatives leadership."

He was referring to Democrats who are working on their own budget-balancing plan and have yet to pass the governor's proposed mix of spending cuts and accounting changes.

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State Shutdown Becomes Real Possibility

MIRS, March 28, 2007

State officials may be able to use a couple of new tricks to save Michigan from a government shutdown May 20. But unless the governor and legislators raise revenue to address the \$941 million budget shortfall soon, the state will run out of money to pay its bills in July, August and September, the state's chief deputy treasurer told the Senate Appropriations Committee today.

Chief Deputy Treasurer Mark **HAAS** said if no action is taken to address the state's cash flow problems, decision-makers could face the real possibility in May of choosing between shutting down services or not making its scheduled payments to schools and Medicaid recipients.

The state could make a one-time change in how it collects tax money to save Michigan from pulling up empty pockets come May 20. But the cash flow projection for the last three months of Fiscal Year (FY) 2007 is much more serious, he said. Michigan has exhausted its Constitutional limits on short-term loans.

When senators asked about using longer-term loans to tackle the rest of 2007, Haas compared the strategy to refinancing a house to pay the grocery bill.

Haas' presentation comes after *MIRS* and at least one other news outlet reported Tuesday that the state was facing a \$387 million cash-flow problem (See "[Cash Flow Problems May Spur Government Shutdown](#)," 3/28/07). The Gov. Jennifer **GRANHOLM** administration confirmed this morning speculation that the governor told cabinet members to develop contingency plans by May 1 to shut down programs.

House Minority Leader Craig **DeROCHE** (R-Novi) called the news today a "scare tactic", and Senate Republicans peppered Haas with questions this afternoon on what could be done short of not making required payments or closing down services on May 20.

Two options emerged. First, the state could change a strange quirk in the law dealing with collecting taxes and paying bills when the common payday falls on a weekend, which is what happens this May 20. State law currently reads that the state needs to pay its bills the Friday before the weekend, in this case May 18. It also reads that those submitting tax money to the state can do so the day after the weekend, in this case May 21.

If the state ironed out the days so they match, Haas agreed that the state may not be caught with the till empty on May 20.

The second option Senate Fiscal Agency Director Gary **OLSON** spoke of involves short-term borrowing from other restricted state funds, such as the Natural Resources Trust Fund or the state's pension funds. Whether dipping may be legal and Haas said he's scheduled to speak with the Attorney General about them.

Neither of these options works later in the summer, when the Department of Treasury is projecting a cash flow shortfall as high as \$800 million in September. Depending on how income tax revenue comes in during late March/early April, these numbers could swing up to \$300 million for the good or for the bad, Haas said.

Outside of the obvious problems of not having enough to pay bills, Haas noted that Wall Street credit rating agencies don't look fondly on unresolved situations. The current state budget problems has caused Michigan's bond rating to fall from AAA in 2003 to AA with a negative outlook in 2007.

This means borrowing money comes with a higher price tag, Haas said.

And since 2003, the state has needed to borrow money just to pay its bills. In 2000, when Michigan had \$2.896 billion in its Rainy Day Fund, Michigan was making \$137 million in interest on the fund. In 2007, the Rainy Day Fund went bone dry and the state has needed to borrow \$1.3 million in short-term loans, costing Michigan another \$85 million in interest payments. Added together, Haas said the cost of doing business in Michigan has increased by \$222 million.

Haas suggested that the state needs revenue and fast. Adjusting the income tax is a possibility, as is increasing taxes on beer, wine, spirits and cigarettes. Fiddling with the sales tax has constitutional limitations, and instituting a brand new tax can't be done in the time needed to make a difference by May 2007.

Republican senators pointed out that they passed a plan last week that uses cuts and one-time fixes to balance the \$941 million hole, Granholm doesn't support the "irresponsible" plan because "it hurts people," said Granholm Press Secretary Liz **BOYD**.

Boyd said the administration is having discussions with the House, but no formal talks with the Senate Republicans are on the schedule. The Republicans adjourn for Spring Recess next week and the week following. The Democratic-controlled House may meet next Thursday and the Thursday thereafter.



Republicans want to take away state worker pay raises

3/28/2007, 4:05 p.m. ET

The Associated Press

LANSING, Mich. (AP) — State workers are the latest group Senate Republicans think should get the ax as the state struggles to fill a budget shortfall.

The Republican-led Senate Appropriations Committee on Wednesday discussed a resolution that would cancel pay raises state employees are supposed to get starting Oct. 1.

The committee didn't vote on the resolution, which needs a two-thirds vote in the House and Senate to pass and therefore would need Democratic support to be adopted.

"Our intent today is to communicate to the public and Democrats the ridiculous situation the payout of these raises involves given our current fiscal crisis," said Matt Marsden, spokesman for Senate Majority Leader Mike Bishop, R-Rochester.

Unionized state employees are supposed to get two raises — each 2 percent — in the budget year that starts Oct. 1. They got a 2 percent raise in fiscal 2006 and a 4 percent raise in the current budget year.

Tom Lenard, spokesman for Senate Democrats, said canceling state workers' pay raises isn't a long-term fix for Michigan's budget problems.

"Good people aren't going to want to work in government if there's always a bull's-eye on their back," he said.

During Democratic Gov. Jennifer Granholm's first term, state employees were required to take unpaid days off and to work 40 hours a week but be paid for 38 to help the state through its earlier budget problems. The two hours were banked and either used toward vacation time or were to be paid to employees when they retired or left state service.

Union leaders said those concessions essentially negated a 3 percent raise state workers got in fiscal 2004 and a 4 percent increase given in fiscal 2005 because the banked leave program took away two hours of pay each week. The banked leave program ended in fiscal 2006.

The number of state workers has dropped more than 9,000 since 2000 as early retirements and unfilled job openings have shrunk their ranks. Some GOP lawmakers have proposed another round of incentives to get more workers to retire early, but the legislation hasn't gone anywhere yet in the House, which is controlled by Democrats.

Granholm opposes offering another "early out" because it could end up costing the state more than it saves.

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Michigan Report

March 28, 2007

PAY RAISE RESOLUTION NOT ACTED ON BY COMMITTEE

A Senate concurrent resolution to block a 3 percent pay increase for state workers in the 2007-08 fiscal year will likely not pass as the Senate Appropriations Committee did not act on the measure and it would have to pass both houses by a two-thirds majority vote in less than two weeks.

But committee members heard that if approved, it could save the state \$109 million in the next fiscal year.

However, State Employer Scott Bowen told reporters that if adopted it would make his job of negotiating a new contract “a lot harder.”

Legislators also had to remember that the pay increase was to repay state workers for effectively taking five weeks without pay during the 2002-03 and 2003-04 fiscal year, he said.

[SCR 7](#) was introduced on Tuesday, and to be effective must be approved by a two-thirds majority of both houses within 60 days of when Governor Jennifer Granholm presented her Executive Budget (which was on February 6).

Senate Democrats had already said they would not vote for the proposal, which makes getting a two-thirds majority – 26 members of the Senate – impossible.

Although [Sen. Irma Clark-Coleman](#) (D-Detroit) said she would like to see a vote on the resolution, in order to see “where members stand on the least of these.”

If the resolution had passed, it would have been the first time the Legislature had blocked a pay increase by resolution.

Ms. Granholm could also ask the workers’ unions to reopen their contracts, committee members were told, though nothing compels the unions to reopen talks.

State workers are scheduled to receive a 2 percent pay hike in October, and then another 2 percent pay hike in April, averaging 3 percent for the full fiscal year.

Mr. Bowen told reporters that the pay increase was negotiated in “good faith” with the workers in exchange for their willingness to give up as much as five weeks of vacation pay.

“These employees have already given \$300 million in concessions,” Mr. Bowen said. And it would be a “very tall order” to ask the unions to open their contracts to new negotiations, he said.

CIVIL SERVICE PAY: Rep. Jack Hoogendyk (R-Texas Township) submitted a notice Wednesday to discharge his [HCR 7](#) from the Government Operations Committee. The concurrent resolution rejects the proposed wage increases for state civil service workers. Earlier this week a similar measure was introduced in the Senate (See [Gongwer Michigan Report, March 27, 2007](#)).

Rejecting Employee Increases Batted Around

MIRS, March 28, 2007

The Senate Appropriations Committee did not act on a resolution this afternoon designed to reject 38,000 state employees' 2 percent raises for Fiscal Year (FY) 2008, a move that would save \$109.9 million next year.

SCR 7 could be discharged out of committee Thursday on the Senate floor, but if both chambers don't approve the measure by a two-thirds vote by April 8, the Constitution's 60-day window for action will close.

State Employer Scott **BOWEN** told reporters that state employees have done their part, already agreeing to \$300 million in concessions a couple of years ago as part of a budget fix. The last two pay increases and the one planned for later this calendar year were hammered out on the bargaining table, and the administration has no interest in going back and reworking the agreements.

"That seems like a very, very tall order," Bowen said.